BOSTON ATHENAEUM

10 Beacon Street, Boston

This is the largest of the nation's extant early proprietary libraries. Privately founded and funded in 1807, prior to the time free public libraries became the norm, it remains a leading research center for scholars of American history. Portions of the libraries of George Washington and John Quincy Adams, and — perhaps surprisingly — a huge collection of Confederate imprints, are among the Athenaeum's treasures.